

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY RABAT

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PARIS FOR LABATT

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PFOR, TS
SUBJECT: UGTT

1. THAMEUR ACHOUR, SON OF HABIB ACHOUR, SECRETARY
GENERAL OF TUNISIAN CONFEDERATION OF WORKERS (UGTT),
INVITED LABATT TO LUNCHEON AT UGTT-OWNED BEACH RESORT
HOTEL JAN 13, THREE DAYS FOLLOWING CONCLUSION
CONFEDERATION'S NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING. CONTENTS
OF CONVERSATION DEVELOPED DURING MEAL CONSIDERED
SIGNIFICANT SINCE YOUNGER ACHOUR SERVES AS OFFICIAL
TO UGTT AND MAINTAINS INTIMATE AND DAILY CONTACT WITH
UNION AND ITS EXECUTIVE BOARD. (AT THE SAME TIME, HE
MANNED HOTEL-BASED TRAVEL AGENCY, ANOTHER UGTT ENTERPRISE.)
EMBASSY BELIEVES YOUNGER ACHOUR REFLECTS FAITHFULLY, IN
THE MAIN, VIEWS WHICH UGTT AND ITS LEADERSHIP WISH TO CONVEY TO USG.

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2. THAMEUR STATED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN UGTT AND USG
WOULD REMAIN ON EVEN KEEL, THAT UGTT HAD NO MAJOR
QUARREL WITH FOREIGN CAPITAL, SINCE IT RECOGNIZED
SUPERIORITY OF WAGES, WORKING CONDITIONS, AND TRAINING
OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN FOREIGN-OWNED ENTERPRISES. ITS
TRUE TARGET WERE THOSE "TUNISIAN CAPITALISTS WHO

ILLEGALLY ENRICHED THEMSELVES AND WHO ALLIED THEMSELVES WITH FOREIGN EXPLOITATIVE CLASSES." HE SOFT-PEDALED UGTT/LIBYAN CONNECTION EXCEPT TO DENY VEHEMENTLY THAT UGTT HAD "JOINED THE REFUSAL FRONT." HE SAID THAT IMPRESSION HAD BEEN CREATED INTENTIONALLY BY UGTT'S ENEMIES.

3. THE NEW AND PARALLEL WORKERS' ORGANIZATION (FORCE OUVRIERE TUNISIENNE) HAD ALREADY "JUMPED OUT OF THE PARTY'S POCKET WITH 35 MEMBERS" ACCORDING TO THAMEUR ACHOUR. HE SAID ITS DOCUMENTATION HAD BEEN DRAWN UP AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ANNOUNCE ITS BIRTH SHORTLY. HE SAID THE UGTT WELCOMED THE EVENT, SINCE IT WOULD CONSTITUTE THE "FIRST TRUE ELECTION SINCE INDEPENDENCE."

4. IN A MINI-TOUR OF THE POLITICAL HORIZON, HE OBSERVED THAT BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFRONTATION WERE ACTING INCREASINGLY AS THOUGH THE PRESIDENCY NO LONGER EXISTED. HE SAID THAT THE UGTT LEADERSHIP CONSENSUS HELD THAT NOUIRA HAD NO CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING BOURGUIBA AND THAT THE "DAUPHIN" CERTAINLY NOW WOULD BE BOURGUIBA JR. HE INTIMATED THAT MASMOUDI WAS STILL IN TUNISIA "AS FAR AS ANYONE KNEW." ACHOUR VOLUNTEERED THAT HIS FATHER WAS SLATED TO CONVENE A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, JANUARY 13, IN BRUSSELS WHERE HE HAD TRAVELED ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ICFTU BUSINESS.

5. COMMENT: WE CONSIDER THAT UGTT COMMITTED GENUINE TACTICAL BLUNDER IN SIGNING JOINT COMMUNIQUE WITH LIBYAN "TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION," FELL INTO LANGUAGE TRAP COMMITTING IT TO RADICAL POSITIONS ON MID-EAST ISSUE, AND NOW IS BACKPEDALING FROM SCENE OF EMBARRASSMENT. THAMEUR ACHOUR'S COMMENT ABOUT THE "FIRST FREE ELECTION" BEARS ADDED SIGNIFICANCE WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT UGTT IN NEAR FUTURE MAY AT LEAST ATTEMPT TO FORM A NEW, RIVAL POLITICAL PARTY.
MULCAHY

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